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THE DÖLLINGERITES,
MR. GLADSTONE,
AND
APOSTATES FROM THE FAITH.

A LETTER
TO
THE CATHOLICS OF HIS DIOCESE,
BY
BISHOP ULLATHORNE.

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APOSTATES FROM THE FAITH.

Dear Brethren,

St. Paul, exhorting his disciples amidst their dangers, says : "Stand fast, and hold the traditions you have learned." He warned the bishop St. Timothy that "in the last days shall come dangerous times." The dangerous times have come, and the Apostolic admonition is therefore urgent : "Stand fast, and hold the traditions you have learned." "Take heed," was the last admonition of the Prince of the Apostles, "take heed, lest, being led away by the error of the unwise, you fall from your own steadfastness."

To be steadfast in the faith is to hold firm to the teaching of Christ delivered by the living voice of His living Church. And this steadfastness is given,

not of man, but of the Holy Ghost. But we are warned to stand fast to the Church's traditions, and to take heed against the error of the unwise, lest, closing our ear to the voice of the Church, and giving our mind to the temptation of the unwise, through our neglect we lose the gift of the Holy Ghost, and suffer shipwreck of our faith.

It is no new thing for a pastor of souls to have to warn his flock of the perils of the time they live in, of perils that beset their faith, and threaten to corrupt their Christian life. It is no new thing for the Vicar of Christ, the Successor of St. Peter, casting his eyes, like a watchful shepherd, over the universal flock, to lift up his voice in tones of solemn warning, and to call on the faithful to remember the faith they have received, and to guard themselves against new forms of error and deceit. You have heard such warnings from St. Peter; you have heard such warnings from St. Paul. And at every point of time in which new heresies have arisen to scandalize the faithful and to tempt the weak and wavering, like warnings have been heard from the Pontiffs and the Bishops.

Let us give thanks to God that He has given us a Pontiff, who, if he has had to follow St. Peter in trouble and affliction, has also imitated his courage, even under the most adverse circumstances, in denouncing false prophets and teachers among the people. And although, through godless conspiracies,

which the profane world has applauded, he has been driven to a corner, as Christ was driven to His Cross, yet, become more conspicuous there, he presents such a sublime example of Apostolic steadfastness and magnanimity as the Holy Spirit can alone create. And amidst the clash and din of armed multitudes, and the yet more bitter and relentless war of hostile opinions waged by the pride and powers of the world "against the Lord and against His anointed," that anointed one has caused his voice to be heard over all, until the world itself has been compelled to listen as well as the Church.

There is nothing in the present condition of the Church's warfare that was not foreseen at its planting; and nothing new in the assault she endures on all sides, from enemies who rival each other in devising new forms of seducing error, and inventing new calumnies, the one contradicting the other. Whilst some say the Church is wrong to stand so steadfast to her old traditions and teachings, others rise up to complain that she has imposed a new article of faith, and an unheard-of rule of obedience. On one side the Church is accused of lending her support too strongly to ancient forms of government and to legitimate rulers, and of being unable to accommodate herself to the progress of events: on the other side, it is asserted that she wishes to interfere between states and their civil subjects.

These opposite and self-contradictory errors are

precisely what might be expected. As the Church has to defend the Truth, she must present a double front to her adversaries. As she has to follow and to teach justice, she must preserve an even balance between opposite forms of error and malice.

The Church is nothing except in so far as she reflects the life, the character, the doctrine, and the moral law of her Divine Founder, our Lord Jesus Christ. But it was a characteristic of His teaching that it led to constant accusations that He was seducing the people from their allegiance to the civil government. It was another characteristic of His teaching, that whenever, in proclaiming, He defined a doctrine, it caused division and a separation of part of them who before that followed Him. He proclaims Himself to be the Son of God, and among His hearers were those who took up stones to throw at Him. He proclaims His eternal existence: "Before Abraham was, I Am," and the anger of His hearers could not be restrained. He proclaimed, and it may be truly said, defined, the eucharistic sacrament of His body and blood, His flesh meat indeed, and His blood drink indeed; and, except the twelve, many who had followed Him went away from Him, saying, "This is a hard saying, who can receive it?" The natural man cannot receive and believe what belongs to the light and power of grace.

So is it with the Church. The representative

authorities of the world cannot bear a rival, even though in a different sphere, in the representative authority of God. And of nothing has the Church been more constantly accused throughout her life, than of seducing the people from their civil allegiance, and of being the enemy of Cæsar because of her fidelity to God. And here is the second resemblance of the Church to Christ. In none of her great councils has she ever defined a fundamental doctrine of her faith, however much received and believed from the beginning of her life, without giving rise to a formal heresy, and a separation from the Church into some new sect. After the Council of Nicea, which defined for the first time the consubstantial divinity of the Son with the Father, the Arians became a heresy and a sect, after the name of Arius their founder. After the Council of Ephesus, which first defined the doctrine of the one person in Christ, and declared Mary, in consequence, to be the Mother of God, the Nestorians became a heresy and a sect, after the name of their originator Nestorius. After the Council of Chalcedon, which first defined the constant faith of the two natures in Christ, the Eutychians became a heresy and a sect, after the name of their author Eutyches. And so in other councils down to the Council of Trent. In that august Council the faith of the Church on Justification and on the Seven Sacraments was defined, and Lutheranism became a formal heresy

and a sect, after the name of Luther, its father and originator.

Not only have the Councils of the Church defined her doctrines with infallible authority, cutting off the unbelievers in her living voice, but the Popes of their own authority have done the same. For example, Peter condemned Simon Magus, and this produced the sect of the Simonites. In an early part of the 5th century, in a letter addressed to the bishops of the whole world, Pope Zozimus defined the doctrine of grace against Pelagius, and the Pelagians became a heresy and a sect after the name of their founder. And, to give an example nearer our times, Pope Urban VIII. condemned the new errors on grace of Jansenius, and the Jansenists became a heresy and a sect under the name of their originator.

Thus you see, beloved brethren, that as whenever our Blessed Lord declared a doctrine on His own infallible authority, a division and a separation followed, so whenever a council has defined a doctrine received from Him, or a Pope has done the same, whilst the Church has stood steadfast to her own traditional teaching derived from Christ, the weak and wavering in faith have fallen off into a sect. And what St. John the Apostle said of the Ebionites, the heretics of his own latter days, who denied that Christ had taken real human flesh, is true of them all: "They went out from us; but they were

not of us. For if they had been of us, they would no doubt have remained with us; but that they may be manifest that they are not all of us."

When, therefore, in the last great Council of the Church, that of the Vatican, four years ago, the Catholic Church defined the infallibility of the Pope whenever, from the chair of authority, he teaches the whole Church concerning her faith and moral doctrine; it was from all precedent to be expected, and was in some degree anticipated, that out of hearts thoughts would be revealed; and that some, who seemed to believe, would be proved to be without the Catholic faith; because they did not believe in the living voice of the living Church, of which hitherto they claimed to be members. And so it has come to pass. The definition of the Church's doctrine has given rise to a new heresy and a new sect, which, from the name of its chief author and most influential promoter, is properly called the sect of Döllingerites.

What do we see in that sect? Priests and laymen, in no great numbers, rejecting the decision of a General Council, rejecting the now unanimous voice of the Bishops of the Church with the Pope at their head; and rejecting, thereby, not only the doctrine defined, but rejecting, as a consequence, the authority as well of the Apostolic See, as of the whole Episcopate. Following the instinct of heresy, they have at once recourse to a long condemned

heresy, that of Jansenism, from which to obtain ordination. They further extend the hand of fellowship to other sects and heresies, invoking their communion—sects which were condemned three hundred years ago, and against which their author and founder Dr. Döllinger had written on the side of the Catholic Church in his better and more faithful days. Not satisfied with these strong manifestations of the spirit of heresy, they have gone further, and if they have not been in all respects the actual originators, they have lent themselves vehemently to promote the most bitter and unrelenting persecution of their Catholic countrymen that has been seen since the days of Julian the Apostate. Such is the character of the last, the newest, the smallest, and most internally divided of all sects.

A great English statesman, to whom we have owed much in the past, has been pleased to put out a pamphlet within the last few days, in which, under the guise of the politician, he attempts the theologian, and, as against the Catholic subjects of her Majesty, he throws himself on the side of the Döllingerites. But the most astounding thing which he has written in that amazing production, is the assertion, that “the most famous and learned living theologian of the Roman Communion is Dr. Von Döllinger.” Than this assertion, could there be a greater proof of incapacity to understand the nature of theology? From the testimony of his

old fellow students, of his co-professors, and of his former archbishop, some of whom we have heard, he never was a theologian, and never much cared for the accepted science of theology. His line has been exclusively that of the critical historian. As a historian of the critical school, which is never constructive, but is ever looking out for blots, he has studied the external aspects of the Church in her ever varied history, and the exterior unfolding of her doctrines rather than the interior mechanism of their order, proportion, relation, dependence and tradition, which is the proper province of theology. Theologians are of the cast of St. Athanasius, of St. Gregory Nazianzen, of St. Augustin, of St. Thomas Aquinas, and of Suarez. The mere historian gives but the external view, and as it were the body of what theology presents in its internal life, soul, economy and spiritual depth. History is not theology, but the servant of theology, as the body is the servant of the spirit. This, however, is the gross danger of the mere critical historian, that, bending his eyes back upon the past ages of the Church, and interpreting them by his critical, that is, his private judgment faculty, he is apt to forget his duty of listening obediently to the voice of the living, speaking and authoritative Church, of which he is baptized a member.

That the new sect should arrogate to itself the claim and title of "Old Catholics," is according to

the traditions of heresy. All new sects claim to be the true old Catholics. From their own principles, as far as they have any left, either they are the Church or we are the Church. Yet they are but a little cock boat launched off in a storm from the great old ship of Peter. How, then, can they be Peter's ship, which is Christ's Church? They are greeted by all the heresies as their newest brethren. How then can they be of the old traditional faith? They are an infant four years old. How can they be the old and venerable Catholic Church? They are not yet compacted into shape and form. How are they a Church in any intelligible sense? They have no kind of universality, whether of time, place or doctrine. How, then, are they Catholic in any sense, be it grave or ridiculous? They may tell us that they continue to be members of the Church, and are working to reform her. What! when they withdraw from her obedience, refuse her faith, withdraw from the authority of her head, and despise the unanimous voice of her bishops? Can lopped off members, left to wither under the blight of her excommunication, be living members of the Church?

And we have seen within this fortnight a marvellous spectacle. An English statesman, first among the foremost, a Protestant if ever man was Protestant, subtle in the rhetoric of speech beyond the force of logic, planting himself on the side of

this unhappy sect, taking his lesson from its members, and stepping forth in a most singular production, to interrogate her Majesty's Catholic subjects, in a see-saw, self-contradictory fashion, as to their duties of civil allegiance to the State. But let Mr. Gladstone and all men know, that we Catholics—you brethren, your priests and your bishops—besides the motives common to other men, have a motive for obedience to the civil power that is peculiar to ourselves; and that is the fixed and unchangeable doctrine and enforcement of the Catholic Church; that, not merely for man's sake, but much more for God's sake, and as a part of our religion, we should be loyal and obedient to whatever civil government is constituted and established over the society in which we live. Need we point to other proof beyond our own habitual conduct? Indeed we have been often reproached by active politicians with too great an acquiescence in the existing state of things, and with too much indifference as to political changes. Nor is this unnatural with men who have quiet consciences, and who care more for the future than for the present world.

What would Ireland have become, with all her grievances, had not her bishops and clergy incessantly inculcated the Catholic's duty of obeying the civil authority? It is a well known fact that the heads of Fenianism maintained and inculcated that the one great obstacle to successful rebellion and revo-

lution was the influence of the Pope and the Catholic Church, ever inculcating the duty of civil obedience. That society was condemned and put down by the Pope at the instance of the Irish Catholic Prelates. If the records of the Foreign Office tell all the truth, which is very much to be doubted, they would show how often instance has been made at Rome to endeavour to obtain some declaration from this or that Pope, to this or that portion of her Majesty's subjects, of the doctrine of the Catholic Church respecting the duty of obedience to the civil power. Those records would likewise tell, or at least the private portfolios of successive Foreign Ministers could tell, what a constant propaganda of revolution has been kept up, if not now, at least until recently, in Catholic states, the chief obstacle to be overcome having always been the loyalty to the constituted civil authority of the real, good Catholics.

And now, as to the home question whether the doctrine and belief in the infallibility at all detracts from our civil allegiance. This illustrious statesman, but very poor theologian, shall have his reply. The Church was always believed to be infallible, although that doctrine had never been defined before the Vatican Council; and all men knew it. And the Pope always wielded this infallibility; and all men knew this to be the fact. What practical change, then, has the definition made?

The Catholic Church is what she always was, neither more nor less. The definition has declared what practically the Holy See has always been. The infallibility leaves all things as before, except that now it is a term of communion. The infallibility can only teach and enforce the unchangeable doctrines of the Church; what was always, everywhere, and by the concurrent fathers held. And one of these unchangeable doctrines is that enforced by the example and words of our Lord, to "render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God, the things that are God's;" and by St. Paul, that we be subject in obedience to the temporal magistrates and to the powers that be. How many Papal Constitutions of recent times enforce this doctrine and duty? The much reviled and much misunderstood Syllabus, which is a collection of passages from Pontifical Constitutions, is pregnant with this doctrine and duty.

But the author of this insulting pamphlet shall have his special reply. And we securely appeal to his own memory and conscience. During the sitting of the Vatican Council, being then Prime Minister, he wrote a letter to an intimate friend who was a Catholic, and in that letter it was said, that if the Church invaded the civil sphere, she must expect the law of retaliation. To this letter its receiver invited the Bishop of Orleans and the present writer to reply. What the Bishop of Orleans

did we do not know, but the writer of this Pastoral replied in a letter communicated to Mr. Gladstone, in which, among other things, it was plainly stated, not merely on the writer's own authority, but on that of one of the Cardinal Presidents of the Council, obtained for the purpose, that there was no intention in any act or decree of the Council to invade the civil sphere. With that letter of the year 1870 in his possession, it seems almost incredible, but for the fact, that its receiver should raise the question anew in 1874, and that on the score of the ancient doctrine of infallibility.

The mode in which the illustrious pamphleteer treats the clauses of the Syllabus is simply disgraceful to a scholar, and to one whose words carry with them a deep responsibility. To interpret the sense of Pontifical Constitutions demands the science of Catholic theology, and an intimate knowledge of its technical language. But even an ordinary logician ought not to be guilty of turning particular negatives into universal negations. This is to destroy the fundamental sense of language. The language of Papal Encyclics is not for the uninitiated. They are addressed to the bishops of the Church, who have the science of their interpretation. Take an example. Mr. Gladstone tells us that the Pope has condemned the freedom of the press and of speech. Not all freedom, most certainly, but unlawful freedom; that is to say, what

is unjust, ungodly, and licentious. And have the laws of England no condemnation of the freedom of the press and of speech? Is there not the law of libel, the law against threatening language, the law against perjury, the law against blasphemy, and the law against obscene publication? And would the laws of England allow of treasonable language? Or the teaching of the communist doctrine that property is theft? There may be, and there is, a difference as to what the Church tolerates in the use of language and what the state tolerates, because one has the sphere of conscience, and the other the sphere of social order; but the fundamental principle that prescribes limits to the freedom of writing or of speech is common to both authorities.

Let there be one specimen given of the way in which Mr. Gladstone renders the sense of an Apostolic Constitution, and so shall the subject be concluded. The original words, rendered into English, are these: "We cannot pass over their audacity, who, not enduring sound doctrine, affirm, that without sin, or any loss of Catholic profession, we may withhold assent and obedience to those judgments and decrees, whose object is declared to regard the general good of the Church, or her rights, or discipline, provided the dogmas of faith and morals are not touched." This Mr. Gladstone has rendered in the following words: "Or who

contend that Papal judgments and decrees may, without sin, be disobeyed, or differed from, unless they treat of the rules of faith or morals." He thus makes that proposition universal, which is limited in the text to the general good of the Church, to her rights and her discipline.

There can be no doubt that the pamphlet, on the spirit of which we have commented, was published, among other reasons, with a view to bring out divisions among the Catholics of these realms. Yet, whatever painful manifestations as to individual belief it may have elicited from some two or more who have hitherto professed the Catholic faith, it will fail of its aim of striking out divisions amongst the faithful flock itself. No one is a Catholic who does not believe the teaching of the living Church, and who adheres not with steadfastness to the dogmatic decisions of her Popes and Councils. Every Catholic, since the Council of the Vatican, is bound to believe in the infallibility of the Pope, when teaching all the faithful what concerns doctrine in faith and morals from the chair of authority. And whosoever does not so believe, has not the Catholic faith, is no longer a child of the Church, and has no right to her sacraments or communion. This it becomes our solemn duty to declare. No one, therefore, has any right, in truth or in justice, to affirm that such persons are members of the Catholic and Roman Church, unless

they repent, and by the mercy of God recover the Catholic faith.

You, dearly beloved, who have learnt the undefiled faith once delivered to the saints, will not be beguiled by sounding words, however specious in argument; and will wonder at the ignorance, or perversity, or jealousy that has prompted such attacks. Where would our faith be, if we were left without an infallible guide to give us the assurance that our hope will not be deceived at last? Or what would be our daily Christian life, if we had no one to enlighten us in the way of justice and charity; to give us correction, discipline, and encouragement in all that relates to conduct and morals? Or what would become of the obedience enjoined on us by the Gospel, if we did not receive our Bishops and Priests as sent from God, and entitled to our submission in all matters of faith and morals, knowing that there is a Supreme Pontiff above them, to whom they yield a like submission, and who is guided by the spirit of God?

You, who are known as orderly, peaceable, and loyal subjects of the realm, who fulfil your duties as members of society bound by equal laws, because such is the line of conduct taught by our holy religion, will find no difficulty in reconciling it with the claims of a higher and holier obedience that you render to the Church of God,—an obedience which is the mainspring of your daily life, and

indeed is that which gives freedom, light, and peace to your soul. You would wonder that anyone should attempt to bring into collision the obligations resting upon you as Christians and citizens ; except that you are aware how great a marvel, how unfathomable a difficulty the Catholic spirit and life present to those outside the Church. And you will wonder still more, that any should be found bearing the name of Catholic, who would join the enemies of the Church in such an assault on the faith which it is our glory and consolation to profess.

Praying God to bless you,

We remain,

Your devoted Bishop,

✠ WILLIAM BERNARD,

BISHOP OF BIRMINGHAM.

Birmingham, Nov. 17th, 1874.

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